

VZCZCXRO1149
PP RUEHROV
DE RUEHDO #1725 3441416
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 101416Z DEC 06
FM AMEMBASSY DOHA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5906
INFO RUEHXK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

UNCLAS DOHA 001725

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [EFIN](#) [EAID](#) [PTER](#) [GZ](#) [IS](#) [QA](#)
SUBJECT: QATARIS WILL USE ARAB LEAGUE OR TEMPORARY
INTERNATIONAL MECHANISM FOR PALESTINIAN AID

REF: DOHA 1712

¶1. (SBU) P/E Chief spoke to Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs Mohamed al-Rumaihy December 7 regarding the mechanism for transferring funds promised by the Qatari government to the Palestinian Authority (reftel). Rumaihy said that Qatar will "certainly" use the Arab League bank account or the Temporary International Mechanism, which he described as the "European mechanism." The MFA's Arab Affairs department did not have further details. Its director reviewed Qatar's previous contributions to the Palestinian Authority: USD 50 million through the Arab League in March 2006, and in September a second USD 50 million for salaries through the account controlled by the PA presidency, presumably referring again to the Arab League mechanism.

¶2. (U) Meanwhile, Qatari press hailed the pledge as having "broken the embargo imposed on the Palestinians." One paper close to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs characterized it as a challenge to other nations to meet their obligations toward the Palestinians. The issue garnered additional coverage because of the Secretary's meeting December 7 with Qatari Foreign Minister Hamad bin Jassim Al Thani (HBJ); Al Jazeera picked up the Department spokesman's remark that funneling the contribution to the Hamas-led government would "cross a line." After the HBJ's meeting with the Secretary, only one local Arabic paper kept the issue on the editorial agenda, saying that "It is strange that Washington refuses this Qatari initiative. This is a position lacking in both courtesy and common sense."

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